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The Doctrinal Contents of Acts

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THE DOCTRINAL CONTENTS OF ACTS.

Our theme leads us immediately into the great field of christian doctrine, but limits the source upon which we are to base our dissertation, to but one book and one writer of Holy Writ, namely the book of Acts, whose inspired author is none other than Luke. Upon a mere glance at our subject, the question might present itself: Are we really justified in treating the book of Acts from a doctrinal view-point? Is not Acts one of the historical books of the Bible, and as such, would we not expect to find history rather than doctrine? The historical nature of Acts is not to be denied, but, "It would be a mistake to affirm that action alone is found in the Acts, and doctrine alone in the Epistles. There is teaching in the former and there is action found in the latter. What is meant is, that these features predominate -- action in the Acts, and doctrine in the Epistles. In both, however, it is the Lord Jesus by His spirit through His chosen agents who performs all." (1) We need but turn to the opening chapters of our book, and there we read Acts 2,42: "And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship." Thus we see that it was doctrine or instruction which served to establish and confirm the early christians. In fact, "any attempt to edify without instruction, a knowledge of the truth and doctrine as the basis is neither in accordance with the example and command of Jesus, nor with the practice and principles of the apostles, and is therefore unevangelical." (2) In the very history of the early church as it is related in Acts, we find the principles of christian doctrine laid down and confirmed, for all that was said and done was based on the Lord Jesus and His teaching. Hence the scholarly Weiss says: "According to this description, [namely of the early church] the church gathered around the teaching of the apostles (which was indeed only the continuation of ^{the} proclamation of Jesus) just as the steadfast following of Jesus, for the purpose of continually hearing his teaching, was, during the lifetime of the Messiah, the sign of enduring discipleship." (3)

That the book of Acts merits a thorough study from the viewpoint of christian doctrine, could hardly be emphasized in more convincing words than those of our honorable Dr. Martin Luther. Luther sums up the doctrinal value of Acts in the following words:- "Das Buch soll man lesen

- 1) Outline Studies in the Acts and Epistles by: W^m. G. Moorehead. p. 13.
- 2) Schaff Lange, "Commentary on Acts" p. 52.
- 3) B. Weiss "Biblical Theology of the New Testament". Vol. I, §40, p. 188. ¹⁸⁸

und ansehen, nicht wie wir etwa getan haben als haette St. Lukas darin allein die eigenen, persoehnlichen Werke oder Geschichte der Apostel geschrieben, zum Exempel guter Werke oder guten Lebens sondern, darauf soll man merken, dass St. Lukas mit diesem Buch die ganze Christenheit lehrt bis an der Welt Ende, das rechte Hauptstueck christlicher Lehre naemlich wie wir alle muessen gerecht werden, allein durch den Glauben an Jesu Christo, ohne alles Zutun des Gesetzes oder Hilfe unserer Werke. Darum treibt er auch so gewaltig nicht allein die Predigt der Apostel von Glauben sondern auch die Exempel und Geschichte solcher Lehre wie die Heiden sowohl als die Juden allein durchs Evangelium ohne Gesetz sind gerecht worden. Darum dies Buch wohl moecht heissen eine Glosse ueber die Epistel St. Pauli. Denn das St. Paulus lehrt und treibt mit Worten und Sprueschen aus der Schrift, das zeigt hier St. Lukas an und beweist es mit Exempeln und Geschichten." (4)

This should indeed be sufficient to show us that Acts is a book well deserving of our sincere and earnest consideration of its doctrinal content. However, not a little in the line of destructive criticism has been written on Acts, all of which is entirely unfair and unjust, having been found to be without foundation and without proof. Unbelieving critics have held that Acts is a mere tendency writing. Others again have held that the whole work is of a conciliatory nature, thus having as its aim to conciliate the "opposing" factions of Peter vs. Paul. Our aim in this work shall be, to present Luke's stand on the main heads of christian doctrine and at the same time, to show that his teaching is wholly in harmony with the other New Testament writers. As was stated in the opening words of our thesis, the source on which we shall base our discussion is solely and specifically, the book of Acts. It is therefore selfevident, that when limited to one specific book of the Bible, not every detail in the field of christian doctrine can be treated. In accordance with the limitation of our theme, we shall therefore present the doctrinal content of Acts just as it is found in the book itself.

For the sake of convenience and order we shall treat the doctrinal content of Acts under the following outline:

4) C. Mueller: "Luthers Auslegung der Heiligen Sohricht." S.447.

I. GOD	{ 1. Attributes { Omnipotent { 2. Creator { Omniscient { 3. Person { True man { 4. Descent to hell. { True God { 5. Resurrection. { 6. Ascension. { 7. Return to judgment { 8. Work..... { Prophet { 9. King
II. Christ	{ Who He is { Office of { 1. Sin { 2. Grace { 3. Conversion { 4. Repentance { 5. Faith and Forgiveness { 6. Election
III. HOLY GHOST	{ 1. Word { 2. Baptism. { 3. Lord's Supper
IV. Soteriology	
V. Means of Grace.	
VI. CHURCH and MINISTRY.	
VII. STATE; Duty towards.	

I

1. With respect to the doctrine concerning God Acts does not offer^{as} as much material as perhaps do many other books of the Bible. But even on this subject we find statements which contain some very important truths.

Acts 7,2: "The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham." Here God is spoken of as ὁ θεὸς τῆς δόξης. "These words contain a doctrinal statement which is of wide application, and which distinctly defines the position assumed by the speaker. All that God is, in Himself -- all His acts -- and all the modes in which He manifests Himself, bear the impress of His glory, that is of absolute greatness, power and majesty. His ways are perfectly free and entirely beyond the control of any creature. He can reveal Himself wheresoever He will, and is not restricted to any spot in creation, to any country, city or building (such as the temple) Man is easily carried away from this truth by a certain centrifugal force, and begins to conceive of God as if He were in a certain manner bound to some finite object. It is therefore necessary to lay stress on the absolute glory of God in order to counteract those delusive limitations of Him who is infinite." (5) Even more definitely is the omnipresence of God brought out by Luke in Chapter 17,27: "That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us." Luke's stand on the omnipresence of God is confirmed by St. John, chapter 14,23: "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." The same truth is emphasized by St. Paul, Eph.1,23: "Which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."

The infinity and omnipresence of God is again clearly brought out in Acts 7,48.49: "Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest?" Furthermore, Luke declares that the omnipresence of God is the causa dirigens of the world, Acts 4,28: "For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done."

2. Luke clearly teaches that God is the creator of the world: Acts 4, 24: "Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is." -- "When the believers prayed they were supported by their faith in the omnipotence of God, who made heaven and earth. This article of faith appears to many to be exceedingly trivial; nevertheless it is one of the original and fundamental truths of revelation from which faith continually derives new strength and consolation. The last book of the Scriptures, the Apocalypse, gives special promin-

5) Schaff-Lange, "Commentary on Acts", p.116.

ence to this truth, which is revealed and illustrated in the first book of the Bible. As truth is an undivided whole the component parts of ^{which} which are essentially connected, no one article of faith can be undervalued without affecting the integrity of the whole." (6) That the decree of ^{of} creation is an essential internal act of God, is taught by Luke Acts 15, 18: "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." Acts 17, 26: "And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth and hath determined the times before ^{not-} appointed and the bounds of their habitation." In this doctrine Luke stands in perfect harmony with the other New Testament writers. St. Paul writes in Col. 1, 16: "For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or ^{dom-} dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and ^{and} for him." Likewise St. John substantiates Luke in his doctrine of creation, Rev. 10, 6: "And sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who ^{cre-} created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer."

In spite of the fact that Luke does not give us a host of passages which refer directly to God, yet, in those which he furnishes us, he is clear and definite, and his teaching is in complete harmony with the other New Testament writers.

II.

We shall proceed to the next point in the order of our outline, ^{which} which is CHRISTOLOGY. On this subject our author offers us no little amount ^{of} of material.

1. The first thing to be considered under the subject of Christology, is the doctrine as to the person of Christ. We therefore ask: Does Luke call Christ God (Θεός)? Here we must answer, No, Luke does not ^{expressis} expressis verbis term Christ Θεός; but indirectly, he clearly teaches the deity of Christ. Acts 2, 36: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly ^{by} that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord ^{and} and Christ." What have we here other than a proof of Christ's deity? We have ^{have}

6) Schaff-Lange: "Commentary on Acts." p. 81.

here the content of all christian preaching: Jesus Christ, true God and man, crucified and resurrected, our Lord and Savior. Again in c.2,33 Luke writes: "he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear." To ^{this} passage Luther remarks: „Nun spricht St. Petrus hier: Jesus von Nazareth ist der Mann, der den Heiligen Geist ausgiesst, oder dass gleich so ^{eth} viel ist: Jesus zur Rechten Gottes erhoben, ist Gott von dem der Prophet Joel gesagt hat, dass er von seinem Geist ausgelesen werde. Damit zeugt er, dass Jesus von Nazareth wahrer Gott sei." (7) And again Luther says: „Der Ketzer Arius hat das nicht koennen zusammenreimen: dass Christus ^{zu-} gleich wahrer Gott und Mensch sei, dass er soll von einer Jungfrau ^{geboren} geboren sein, soll auf Erden stehen, gehen, essen, trinken, schlafen, wachen, schwitzen wie ein anderer Mensch; und soll dennoch in Ihm wohnen die ganze Fuelle der Gottheit leibhaftig. Aber hier steht der Text, Joel sagt: Jesus von Nazareth habe es getan. Darum muss Jesus von Nazareth, Marien Sohn, wahrer, ewiger Gott sein." (8) Thus Luther saw in the ^{above} passage a clear statement, teaching the deity of Christ. On another ^{he} occasion Luke ascribes to Christ such qualities as clearly indicate His deity, e.g. : 3,14: "But ye denied the Holy One and the Just." "With respect to the person of Jesus, Peter describes Him as the holy and just One, that is, not merely guiltless, as contradistinguished from Barabbas the criminal, but in a positive sense, perfectly holy and just, as well in relation to God, (ἅγιος) as in relation to men (δίκαιος). And ^{doubt-}less here too the definite article τὸν ἅγιον is of weight, and has ^{even} a doctrinal significance; for it indicates a certain peculiarity not ^{else} where found, and exalts Jesus in a moral and religious respect, ^{the} above the whole human race." (9) Quite in accordance with Luke on this point, is also the testimony of Mark, Mark 1,24: "I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God." So also St. John confirms the words of Luke, 1 John 2,20: "But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. Equally in harmony is the teaching of Luke on this point with that of Matthew, Matt.27,19: "Have thou nothing to do with that just man." ^{like-}wise Matt.27,24: "I am innocent of the blood of this just person." ⁱⁿ

B. Weiss points out that in Acts 11,23.24, Jesus is called κύριος; in

7) Luther, St. Louis XIII, 2066.

8) Luther, St. Louis XIII, 2068.

9) Schaff-Lange: "Commentary on Acts." p.68.

1,21; 4,33; 11,20; and 15,11 He is called Κύριος Ἰησοῦς, as only Jehovah Himself is named, hence Luke teaches the deity of Christ." ⁽¹⁰⁾ So also Acts 9, 13 and 14: "And Ananias answered and said, Lord I have heard by many of this man how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name." "It is an important christological point that when Ananias answers, he terms the disciples of Jesus not only οἱ ἐπικαλούμενοι τὸ ὄνομά σου (v.14), but also οἱ ἅγιοί σου (v.13). In the Septuagint, and here, also, ἐπικαλεῖσθαι (mid) ὄνομα is the Greek phrase for מִשְׁכָּל שֵׁם . Here the fact is stated as one well known, that the Christians call on Jesus, or, address prayers to Him, as the Israelites of the old covenant addressed Jehovah. And when Ananias describes the christians as the saints of the Lord Jesus, he again employs an expression which in the old covenant could have reference to Jehovah alone. If Christ has His saints, the statement of the fact itself, ascribes divine honor to Him. Both conceptions, οἱ ἐπικαλούμενοι τὸν Κύριον and οἱ ἅγιοι αὐτοῦ, are of such a nature as to indicate the Deity of Christ." ⁽¹¹⁾ Quite in accordance with this line of argument we have another statement, Acts 9,35: "And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him and turned to the Lord." "The conversion to the Lord" is nothing less than another testimony to the Deity of Christ. In Acts 15,19 Luke uses the words ἐπιστρέφειν ἐπὶ τὸν Κύριον referring to the conversion of the heathen. Now if faith in Christ is a conversion to the Lord, then Christ's Deity, His divine nature and dignity are most naturally presupposed. For the word ἐπιστρέφειν indicates such a turning to the Lord so that one's entire faith and trust is placed in Him, to Whom one turns. Hence, Christ must be true God otherwise such conversion to Him would be mere idolatry.

Luke also shows that Christ does such things as only God can do. ^{Acts} Acts 15,9: "And put no difference between us and them purifying our hearts ^{by} faith." Now if Christ purifies our hearts and gives us eternal ^{salvation} salvation He must certainly be no One less than true God. Again in Acts 20,28 we read: "Take a heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers, to feed the church of God which He hath purchased with His own blood." On this text Luther comments: "This is surely a clear text from which follows without all contradiction that Christ our Lord, through whose blood the church was pur-

10) B. Weiss: "Biblical Theology of the New Testament". § 39, p.180.

11) Schaff-Lange: "Commentary on Acts." p.170.

chased, is God to whom the church belongs. For he says clearly: It is God who through His blood, has won the church, and whose own the church is. Since now, as we have heard, the persons are distinct and it still is written here that God Himself through His blood has purchased the Church, therefore the conclusion comes with great force that God has His own blood which He has shed for His church, that is, that Christ our Savior. is true God, born of the Father from eternity thereafter also by the Virgin Mary in time become a man and born." (12)

Although Luke has not said in so many words that Jesus is God, nevertheless he has given us sufficient statements, which, when summarized, amount to the same thing. The complete harmony of Acts with the other New Testament books on the doctrine of the Person of Christ has prompted Schmiedel to write: "A representation of Jesus so simple and in such exact agreement with the impression left by the first three Gospels is nowhere else to be found in the whole New Testament." (13)

Having noted what the Acts tells us concerning the Deity of Christ, we shall now direct our attention to the other phase of the person of Christ, namely, His humanity. Although the passages in Acts on this point are more limited in number, nevertheless, Luke does not leave us without a word on this subject. In spite of the divine dignity and authority which Luke assigns to Christ in the Acts, he consistently refers to Him in terms of humanity, as to One who had been, while upon earth, a man among men. "It cannot be said that any special stress is laid on his human nature. The time had not yet come when it was necessary to emphasize His true manhood over against Docetic or Gnostic tendencies. If some slight emphasis is to be detected, it is due rather to wonder that One to whom so much honor is assigned, through whom so much is expected, was One with whom the disciples had been on familiar terms. This is suggested by the frequency with which the simple name Jesus is used (three times as often as the title "Christ") by the reiterated designation "Jesus the Nazaraean", and by the emphatic designation which occurs more than once -- 'This Jesus did God raise up' (Acts 2,32.36). It is 'Jesus' whom Stephen sees standing at the right hand of God (Acts 7,55), and 'Jesus' who speaks to Saul from heaven. It was in the fact that St. Peter and St. John had been companions of 'Jesus' that the members of the Sanhedrin found some explanations of their boldness and powers of speech (Acts 4,¹³ It was in the name of 'Jesus' that they taught (Acts 4,18), and in the

12) Citation from Luther in Kretzmann's Commentary, vol. I. N. T., p. 689.

13) Hastings's Dictionary of the Apostolic Church. p. 179.

same name that they wrought miracles. In all this we see the tokens of a very early form of Christology; one moreover which would be very difficult to account for, either as the invention or as the recollection of a later generation." (14)

At the occasion of the conversion of Paul, we have the following words, Acts 9,5: "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." From these words it is clear that "Jesus appeared to Paul personally in his glorified corporality, as true man, as the same Jesus, who dwelt on earth, and who nevertheless appeared at this time from heaven in divine glory. This fact bears witness to the abiding humanity of the glorified Redeemer and to His glorified corporality." (15) In Acts 17,31, Luke testifies quite clearly to the true humanity of Christ: "Because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained wherof he hath given assurance unto all men in that he hath raised him from the dead." This passage is proof both of Christ's divinity and of His humanity. "Two features of the person of Jesus Christ are depicted -- He is described as man, a member of the human race, and subject to death (ἐκ νεκρῶν), and as the judge of the world; to this office He was appointed by God, who has also, by raising Him from the dead, presented Him to men, as the object of their implicit faith. But if God will hereafter judge the world in the person of Jesus Christ, it follows that Christ is not merely man, but also true God." (16) In his stand on the humanity of Christ, Luke is substantiated by Paul 1 Tim. 2,5.6.: "For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." So also Mark 15,39: "Truly this man was the Son of God," and John 13,31: "Now is the Son of man glorified."

2. The Acts is not silent even on such a matter as Christ's descent to hell. Although we have but one main reference to this fact we cannot pass by without devoting a few words to this point. Luke writes Acts 2,31: "He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption." "Luke assigns a great deal of importance to the fact that Jesus had subjected Himself truly and fully, but not abidingly to the law and necessity of death. He too had been in that state of transition which intervenes be-

14) Hasting's Dictionary of the Apostolic Church. vol. I, p.179.180.

15) Schaff-Lange: Commentary on Acts. p.165.166.

16) Schaff-Lange: Commentary on Acts. p.328.

tween terrestrial life and the resurrection-life of eternity, and thus all that belongs to human nature was manifested in His personal experience; the raising up of Jesus on the other hand was a victory the more decisive since He had Himself fully and unconditionally entered into the state of the dead. The particular end which was in view, when he descended to the place of the dead was later clearly revealed."⁽¹⁷⁾ Thus also does St. Peter testify 1 Pet. 3, 19: "By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison." As Luke testifies to the exaltation of Christ in His descent to hell, so also does St. John confirm the same, Rev. 1, 18: "I am He that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive ^{for} evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and death."

3. The next christological point in the order of our presentation ^{is}, the resurrection of Christ. Here again the Acts furnishes us with most valuable testimony. Luke writes that the Apostles were witnesses of the Lord's resurrection, Acts 2, 32: "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses." It was impossible that their senses deceived ^{them} for they enjoyed the company of their risen Lord and received from Him their special commission. The absolute surety of our Lord's resurrection ^{is} also to us, who place our hope and faith in the risen Savior, a source of great comfort and consolation. In the same chapter Luke writes, ²⁴ v. 24: "Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. Here Luke plainly testifies that God had raised Jesus from the dead, having triumphed over the pangs of death, which was not able to hold Him captive. Here too the Acts ^{is} supported and confirmed by the other New Testament books. Paul ^{writes} Gal. 1, 1: "by Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead." So also Peter, 1 Pet. 1, 21: "Who by him do believe in God that raised him from the dead." Likewise Matthew, Matt. 17, 23: "And they ^{shall} kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again."

Again in Acts 1, 3, 22 our author writes: "To whom also he showed ^{him-}self alive after his passion by many infallible proofs." Beginning ^{from} the baptism of John unto that same day that he was taken up from us ^{must} one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection." "Christ showed Himself to the apostles alive. This circumstance indicates the high importance of the resurrection with respect to our faith. The fact that He lives is the principle of life -- the punctum saliens of ^{Chris-}tianity; it is the main support -- the heart of all christian faith,

charity and hope. The resurrection attested the person and crowned the work of Jesus; it constitutes the foundation of the christian faith. Not only was it originally the great and preeminently glorious fact of the history of redemption in the eyes of the first disciples, but it is still regarded in that light by all believers. What results could the incarnation of God or the crucifixion of Jesus have produced without this resurrection from the dead? The resurrection of Jesus still affords a test in our day, whether in essential points an individual is in bondage to unbelief, or whether he offers his homage to the true faith. He who cannot prevail on himself to receive the fact of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead in faith, has not yet even in a general sense acquired a correct knowledge of the Son of God for he does not know the living Christ. (18) In accordance with what Luke emphasizes concerning the resurrection, Paul writes in 1 Cor. 15, 14: "And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." Thus also Peter writes, 1 Pet. 1, 3 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Again in Acts 13, 30, 31 Luke stresses the resurrection: "But God raised him from the dead; and he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem who are his witnesses unto the people." "The full importance of the resurrection of Jesus for the christian faith must ever be kept in mind, since it is fundamental for the understanding of Christ's redemption. The first proof which Paul brings for the resurrection is the testimony of the eyewitnesses. Jesus was seen many days by those that had traveled with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who were now kept busy bearing witness of that fact to the people. Because of the certainty of this miracle not only the eyewitnesses, but also the present speaker and Barnabas were bringing their hearers the Gospel news, that the promise given to the fathers God had fulfilled for those that were present, their children in this fact, that He raised Jesus from the dead. And in case the eyewitnesses were not deemed sufficient by them, Paul brings proof from Scripture. There were the words of the second Psalm: "Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee." He was the eternal Son of God, in full possession of eternal life. It was impossible for Him to remain in death; He must arise and give full expression to the life that was His from eternity." (19)

If we had nothing more than what Acts furnishes us on the resurrection

18) Schaff-Lange: Commentary on Acts. p. 23.

19) Kretzmann's Popular Commentary, vol. I, N. T. p. 599.

(12)

of Jesus Christ, our knowledge would be complete as far as the ^{essentials} are concerned.

4. Having noted what Acts reveals concerning the resurrection of ^{our} Savior, we shall now see what our book has to say about His ascension. Here again, Luke does not fail to make a definite report of this fact. Acts 2,32: "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, ^{he} he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight." The apostles regarded the ascension as a fact of great importance for all, and did not fail to proclaim the same as such. Luke wishes to emphasize that ^{the} the ascension of the Lord was no fraud or deception, neither an optical delusion, but a plain historical fact which is not to be doubted. Luke's ^{report} report is in harmony with the Gospels, for St. John writes John 6,62: "What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?" So also do the Epistles witness to the testimony of Acts, Eph.4,10: "He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things", likewise Eph.4,8: "Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high he had led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men." Mark too agrees with Luke, Mark 16,19: "So, then, after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God." Discussing the ascension of Christ, Dr. Hoenicke writes: "Von der Himmelfahrt, ascensio, redet die Schrift zuweilen so, dass sie das Sitzen zur Rechten einschliesst (Apg.2,33.34: 'Nun er durch die Rechte Gottes erhöht ist, und empfangen hat die Verheissung des Heiligen Geistes vom Vater, hat er ausgegossen dies, das ihr sehet und hoeret. Denn David ist nicht gen Himmel gefahren. Er spricht aber, Der Herr hat gesagt zu meinem Herrn: Setze dich zu meiner rechten'.); ^{des} ^{aber} ^{aber} aber bezeichnet sie damit das sichtbare Aufschweben gen Himmel allein (Apg.1,9: 'Und da er solches gesagt, ward er aufgehoben zusehens, und eine Wolke nahm ihn auf vor ihren Augen weg'). Das erstere ist ascensio late dicta, das letztere ascensio stricte dicta." (20)

5. Christ, the risen Lord, who ascended into heaven, will, according to Acts, return again to judge the World. Acts 1,11: "This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." "The same Christ who went to heaven will hereafter return; He who comes to judge the living and the dead, ^{is} is the Son of man, the Crucified One, the same who was wounded for us, who was dead, but is now alive forevermore. The heavenly messengers bear witness to a threefold truth: He will return; He will return as the same; He

will return in like manner as He went, i.e. visibly and in glory. The angels make no allusion as to the precise time of his coming, even as He Himself had declared that the time and seasons were secrets belonging to the Father alone."⁽²¹⁾ Luke has the support of Matthew also on this ^{point} Matt. 25, 31: "When the Son of Man shall come in his glory and all the ^{holy} angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory." So ^{also} 2 Pet. 3, 10: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that ^{are} therein shall be burned up." On three other occasions Luke speaks of our Lord's return to judgment, Acts 3, 20, 21: "And he shall send Jesus ^{Christ} which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the ^{mouth} of all his holy prophets since the world began." That Christ is ordained of God to be the judge, Luke testifies Acts 10, 42: "He is ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead." Again Acts 17, 31 Luke writes: "God hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained."

6. The sixth and final point to be considered in discussing the christological material offered us in Acts, is: The Work of Christ, ^{As} a. As Prophet; b. As Priest, and c. As King. On each of these heads Luke ^{does} not fail to give us some definite word.

A. Luke clearly refers to the prophetic office of Christ, Acts 10, ³⁶36: "The word which God sent unto the children of Israel preaching peace by Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all)." "Peter describes the work of Christ with great fulness, and in a very instructive manner. He assigns the first place to the prophetic office of Jesus. God has, he says, proclaimed peace through Jesus Christ; thus the welcome message of peace, that is the word or the doctrine of Christ is prominently ^{presented}; but he mentions at the same time, the acts of Jesus or the benefits which He conferred in healing the sick and demoniacs. The act was in harmony with ^{the} word; the latter announced peace and salvation, the former procured salvation and peace. Jesus, he says, was an eminent Prophet in deeds and works; His doctrine proclaimed saving truth, and wherever He personally appeared, in the whole country, He furnished effectual aid, restoring ^{the} the sick to health and freeing those who groaned under the tyranny of Satan by which they were held captive. The act imparts new efficiency to the

21) Schaff-Lange: Commentary on Acts. p. 15.

word, insomuch that if Christ would cease to-day actually to bestow reconciliation, salvation, peace and liberty on souls that are bound, His word of the Gospel would no longer be received in faith." ⁽²²⁾ To show that Luke is in harmony with the other New Testament writers also as to the prophetic office of Christ, we need but note what Matthew says Matt. 9, 35: "And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people." Furthermore, Christ is precisely termed Prophet, Acts 3, 22: "For Moses truly said unto the fathers, a Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; Him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever He shall say unto you."

B. But the Acts also refers to the priestly office of Christ. We believe that Christ has rendered complete atonement for our sins, that He has reconciled the world with God, and still makes intercession for us before the throne of God. So also does Luke teach, Acts 10, 43: "To him give all the prophets witness that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." "Here the sacerdotal office of Christ is clearly indicated. Everyone, who believes in Him, receives the remission of sins through His name. The remission of sins through His name, that is, through His person, when it is acknowledged and confessed, unmistakably presupposes that He is personally the Medium through whom divine grace and forgiveness are obtained, or, in other words He is the Author of this reconciliation." ⁽²³⁾ Quite in accord is the teaching of St. Paul, 2 Cor. 5, 18 and 19: "And all things are of God who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to-wit that God was in Christ, reconciling the world ^{unto} Himself, not imputing their trespasses ^{unto} them; and hath committed ^{unto} us the word of reconciliation." Peter voices the same thought, 1 Pet. 1, 18, 19: "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." So also St. John, 1 John 1, 7: "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son, cleanseth us from all sin."

C. We find that Acts also ascribes to Christ distinctly the office of King. He is King in a three-fold kingdom: the kingdom of power, ^{grace,} grace, and glory. This is clearly brought out in Acts 10, 36, 38: "The word ^{which}

22) Schaff-Lange: Commentary on Acts. p. 205.

23) Schaff-Lange: Commentary on Acts. p. 205.

(15)

God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ ^{(he} is Lord of all). 38. How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power." To this passage, Dr. Hoenicke remarks: "Wie das prophetische and hoepriesterliche Amt, so verwaltet Jesus das koenigliche Amt nach beiden Naturen. Er uebt es aus in dem dreifachen Reich; dem regnum potentiae, gratiae et gloriae nach Zeugnis der Schrift."⁽²⁴⁾ The words πάντων κύριος and κοιτης ζώντων καὶ νεκρῶν could hardly express the kingly office of Christ more definitely. Christ is the Lord ^{of} all men, whether Jew or Gentile and all owe Him obedience. Christ's kingdom embraces all mankind over which He is the Ruler. Christ has ^{been} appointed to be the judge of the world, and as such, He is the Judge of the living and the dead, and of all those who shall yet be born. Another reference to Christ's office as King is made in Acts 5,31: "Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins." Jesus is called 'Αρχηγός for He is indeed our Leader. "He is not only the chief 'the author and ^{finis-}her of our salvation' (Heb.12,2), but also the Ruler who claims obedience. The office of King is here indicated. Christ as 'Αρχηγός commands an ^{army} which obeys Him, a kingdom which belongs to Him. But He is also termed σωτήρ. He saves us from the greatest evil, the most imminent danger ^{truce} namely, from sin and its wages, from the wrath of God and eternal destruction. It is His great object as our Ruler, to deliver, to minister and to save. He seeks the salvation of the souls of men, and not His own honor, might and glory."⁽²⁵⁾ As in the other points, so also here we need but note the testimony of some of the other New Testament writers, and we shall see that Luke's stand is wholly in harmony with other New Testament writers. St. John writes, John 18,37: "Pilate therefore said unto Him, Art Thou a King, then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a King." Pet-er also writes, 1 Pet.3,22: "Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him." Likewise does St. Paul testify, Eph.1,21.22: "Far above ^{all} principality, and power and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over ^{all} things to the church."

24) Hoenicke's Dogmatics. vol.III. p.232.

25) Schaff-Lange: Commentary on Acts. p.99.

The next point on which we must examine the Book of Acts is the doctrine concerning the third Person in the Trinity, the Holy Ghost. The first question to be settled in this connection is naturally: Who is, according to Acts, the Holy Ghost?

1. Luke definitely tells us in Acts 5,3 who the Holy Ghost is: "Why has Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?" v.4: "Thou hast not lied unto men but unto God." "These words furnish us with most important instruction respecting the doctrine of the Holy Ghost. Their sin is a trespass against the Holy Ghost, a crimen laesae majestatis, committed against the Holy Ghost. Now we have in this procedure of the apostle essentially and directly the evidence both of the personality and of the Deity of the Holy Ghost. Such solemn language uttered so impressively and intended to expose promptly and fully the secret guilt contracted by the persons here addressed cannot receive consistently and interpretation which would assume that the term: Holy Ghost simply denotes a power or an operation of God. The Holy Ghost is here, on the contrary, distinctly assumed to be a Person, with whom men deal uprightly or deceitfully, whom they may put to the test, (πειράσαι v.9), or whom they may attempt to deceive by lying words. Again Peter bears witness, to the Deity of the Holy Ghost when he says: οὐκ ἔψευσω ἀνθρώποις ἀλλὰ τῷ θεῷ." (28) Luke is supported in this doctrine by Gospels and Epistles: Matt.28,19: "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." 2 Cor.3,17: "Now the Lord is that Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." 1 Pet.4,14: "The Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you."

On the basis of Acts 2,33: "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear," it seems clear that Luke teaches that the Spirit is spirited by and proceeds from the Father and the Son. Commenting on this text, Luther says: „So wird nun hier durch den Apostel angezeigt, dass Jesus Christus, von den Juden gekreuzigt, sei die Mittelperson in der Gottheit. Denn gleich wie der Vater den Heiligen Geist sendet und ausgiesst, also auch der Sohn sendet und giesst aus den Heiligen Geist. Dass also auch der Heilige Geist ebensowohl vom Sohn gesandt und ausgegossen wird, als vom Vater, ohne dass der Sohn alles vom Vater hat und nicht wiederum der Vater vom Sohn. Denn der Vater ist der Ursprung oder Quelle (wie es die Vaeter nennen) der Gottheit. Denn der Vater hat dem Sohn die ewige Gewalt und Gottheit und alles ganz

28) Schaff-Lange: Commentary on Acts. p.87.

und voellig gegeben, wie Er sie selbst hat von Ewigkeit; dass also der Sohn mit dem Vater ein einiger, ewiger, rechter Gott ist."⁽²⁷⁾ That there is no conflict between Luke and the other New Testament writers also on this point can easily be established. John 15,26: "The Spirit^{of} truth which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of me." The same is taught by Paul, Gal.4,6: "God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." So also Peter testifies, 1 Pet.1,11: "Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ^{Christ} which was in them did signify."

2. Having noted what Acts says about the Person of the Holy Ghost, we shall now see if any definite word is furnished concerning His Office or work. Here again our Book does not leave us in the dark. Acts 16,14 we read: "And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." Let us here note what our Confessions say on the basis of this text: "With the Word the Holy Ghost is present, and opens hearts so that they are attentive to it, and are thus converted alone through the grace and power of the Holy Ghost, whose work alone the conversion of man is. For without His grace, and if He does not grant the increase, our willing and running our planting, sowing and watering, all are nothing, as Christ says John 15,5: 'Without me ye can do nothing'." ⁽²⁸⁾ Luke's teaching is endorsed by St. Paul, 1 Cor.12,3: "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost", also by Peter, 1 Pet.1,5: "Ye are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." Acts gives us a detailed account of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, Acts 2,1-11. In a sermon on this text Luther writes: "Da siehst du ja klar dass nicht Sein Amt sei, ^{Buch-}er schreiben noch Gesetze machen; sondern dass er ein solcher Geist ist, der in das Herz schreibt, und schafft einen neuen Muth, dass der Mensch vor Gott froehlich wird und Liebe zu ihm gewinnt, und darnach den Leuten mit froehlichem Gemuehte dient..... Aber zu dem, dass solches gepredigt wird, gehoeret nun, dass es auch geglaubt werde. Darum gibt Gott den Heiligen Geist dazu, der drueckt solche Predigt ins Herz, dass sie darin haftet und lebt..... Darum, sollen wir ⁱⁿ (den Schatz) haben, so muss der Heilige Geist kommen, der uns ins Herz gebe, dass wir glauben und sprechen: Ich bin auch der einer, der solch Gut haben soll."⁽²⁹⁾

27) Luther, St. Louis XIII, p.2067.

28) Triglotta, p.787.

29) Luther, St. Louis XII, p.622.

The next important point concerning which we must examine the contents of our Book is Soteriology. Soteriology, as defined by Dr. Graebner in his "Doctrinal Theology", is the doctrine of Holy Scripture concerning the application of the merits of Christ to the individual sinner, whereby the sinner is led to the actual possession and enjoyment of the blessings which Christ has procured for all mankind.

1. Why do men need to appropriate unto themselves, the merits of Christ? Acts answers this question by showing that all men are sinners, Acts 15,9: "And put no difference between us and them." Luke herewith clearly declares that all men are sinners, God having made no difference between Jew and Gentile. This is taught throughout the New Testament. Rom. 3,23: "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." James 2,19: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." Furthermore, when Luke says Acts 19,43: "Whosoever believeth in him shall receive forgiveness of sins," he thereby indirectly bears witness that all men are sinners since forgiveness is offered to all and thus declares that all need forgiveness. St. John says John 3,6: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit," hence, he who would be saved must be born again.

2. That all men are sinners Luke has not failed to bring out in the Acts. But when we treat sin we also naturally think of its opposite, grace. So we shall now inquire as to what our Book says concerning God's grace. Luke gives us a most wonderful insight into the grace of God when he relates the conversion of Paul, Acts 9. Paul says in v.6: "What wilt thou have me to do?" "The following thoughts must have occurred to Paul and moved him very deeply: 'I have then persecuted Him even when I little thought that I was doing it; I have sinned against Him! He is exalted in heaven, possesses irresistible power, justly claims humble and implicit obedience ($\tau\acute{\iota}\ \mu\grave{\epsilon}\ \theta\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\iota\varsigma\ \pi\omicron\iota\upsilon\eta\sigma\alpha\iota$); and yet I have resisted Him! I now feel with whom I have to do. Nevertheless, He has not met me for judgment He has not crushed me in His wrath. He has rather with pity and love arrested my erring steps, has called me to Himself, yea, assigns a holy work to me.' This was grace--full, free pitying grace granted to the sinner. Paul's deep fall, on the other hand, taught him to understand the height and glory of divine grace. Now his own personal experience enabled to understand the nature both of sin and of grace, revealing the latter as the preponderating power of God. 'Where sin abounded, there did grace much more abound,' Rom. 5,20." (30)

Again in Acts 13,43 Luke writes: "Who, speaking to them, persuaded them ^{to} to continue in the grace of God." χάρις τοῦ Θεοῦ here designates the grace of reconciliation and redemption, which is imparted to Christ to sinners. God's grace is placed in contrast to sin. Peter testifies with Luke ^{con} concerning the grace of God, 1 Pet. 5,10: "But the God of all grace who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Jesus Christ, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." ^{have} So also Matthew, Matt. 11,28: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

3. If sinful man is to become a partaker of the grace of God, he ^{must} must be converted. Thus the next point which is logical for us to consider here, is conversion. What does Acts teach concerning the conversion of the sinner to God? That conversion is solely and purely the work of God, we find clearly and expressly taught in Acts. Acts 16,14: "And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she ^{at-} attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." "Lydia was one ^{div-} individual among the few female hearers who took to heart the words which Paul spoke and listened without devout attention. Her susceptibility itself was already an effect of grace. The Lord Jesus Christ had called his ^{mes-} messengers to Macedonia, and it was He who opened her heart. The human heart is closed and barred by sin, so that divine truth cannot enter, enlighten the mind, direct the will, and renew the inner man. Grace opens the ^{heart} heart and converts it unto good ground in which the seed can remain take root and grow."⁽³¹⁾ St. Paul, St. Peter and St. John, all voice the same ^{word} word concerning conversion. Col. 1,12,13: "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the ^{saints} saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." John 6,29: "Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe ^{on} on him whom he hath sent." 1 Pet. 1,21: "Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith ^{and} and hope might be in God." Furthermore, Luke narrates in detail the conversion of Paul, Acts 9,3-9; 22,6-11; 26,12-16. On the basis of this Dr. Kretzmann writes: "The conversion of a person is not always attended ^{by} by such miracles, as in the case of Saul, but it is always as miraculous. It is the Lord that conquers and vanquishes the sinners, His enemies. His holy law strikes them to the ground, drives them to fear and despair. But ^{But} He immediately follows with the comforting message of the Gospel, and

then the wonder is performed. The resistance and enmity of the unregener-^{ed}ated heart is changed to a cordial acceptance of the love of God. That is the miracle of conversion."⁽³²⁾ That it is the Lord's work alone when sinners are converted, and the result of His good and gracious will for the salvation of sinners, is confirmed by Luke, Acts 2,47: "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." Again we read Acts 5 31: "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." On the basis of this text the Formula of Concord says: "To be born anew, and to obtain inwardly another heart, mind, and disposition, this only the Holy Ghost effects. He opens the understanding and heart to understand the Scriptures and to give heed to the Word."⁽³³⁾

4. However, a mere knowledge and conviction of sin will never bring salvation, but there must follow repentance. Thus the next point in order is, repentance. Acts 5,31; Luke gives us a definite word regarding repentance: "Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." "The apostles had testified from the beginning, that no one could be saved through Christ without a change of mind ($\mu\epsilon\tau\acute{\alpha}\nu\omicron\iota\alpha$); they also taught that all who repented of their sins should obtain forgiveness and grace through Jesus Christ. But Peter here intimates that repentance and forgiveness of sins are to be viewed as the grace or gift of God ($\delta\omicron\upsilon\nu\alpha\iota \mu\epsilon\tau\acute{\alpha}\nu\omicron\iota\alpha\nu \dots \kappa\alpha\iota \acute{\alpha}\rho\epsilon\sigma\iota\nu \acute{\alpha}\nu\alpha\rho\tau\acute{\iota}\omega\nu$)."⁽³⁴⁾ Matthew and Paul confirm the truth that man cannot atone for his sins, and cleanse himself from guilt, by his own means, Matt.13,15: "Lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted and I should heal them." So also St. Paul, 2 Tim.2,25: "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." The purpose of repentance is clearly set forth by Luke, Acts 3,19: "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." Again in Acts 11 18: "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." Thus the purpose of repentance is: the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Against the Roman Catholic Church, which teaches and requires as divine ordinance the enumeration and confession of every sin to the priest, the Acts distinctly testifies, Acts 2,37.38: "Now when they heard

32) Kretzmann: Popular Commentary, vol. I, N.T. p.577.

33) Triglotta, p.891.

34) Schaff-Lange: Commentary on Acts. p.99.

this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." "These men felt, with the keen misery of an evil conscience, that they were murderers in the sight of God. That is the beginning of repentance: a keen realization of sin and a deep sorrow over the offense thus offered to God. This is brought out by the eager, uneasy question of the hearers: What shall we do, men and brethren?.... The first thing Peter urges them to do is to repent truly and sincerely, to admit all guilt before the face of God, and the second step is that every one of those whose heart was thus filled with sorrow and remorse should be baptized on or in the name of Jesus Christ."⁽⁸⁵⁾

5. The fifth point which we are now about to consider deals with the central doctrine of Christianity. The question at issue is: How is the sinner justified before God and made an heir of eternal life? We shall now see how Acts answers this question, and thus see whether Acts teaches salvation by faith, or by our own merits.

Our Book is very outspoken in teaching the true and only way to salvation. Luke says Acts 10,43: "Whosoever believeth in Him shall receive forgiveness of sins." These words bear witness that Jesus Christ is the only Mediator, and shows clearly and ^{undoubtedly} unmistakably that faith in Christ or a confiding acceptance of the Redeemer is the direct and only way to forgiveness and salvation. On the basis of the above text the Apology declares: "How could this be said more clearly? We receive remission of sins, he says, through His name, i.e., for His sake; therefore not for the sake of our contrition, attrition, love, worship, works. And he adds: When we believe in Him. Therefore he requires faith. For we cannot apprehend the name of Christ except by faith. Besides, he cites the agreement of all the prophets. This is truly to cite the authority of the Church. (For when all the holy prophets bear witness, that is certainly a glorious, great, excellent, powerful decretal and testimony)."⁽⁸⁶⁾ That we are justified by faith, Acts clearly declares: "And put no difference ^{between} us and them, purifying their hearts by faith." (Acts 15,9) "This verse teaches first of all, that faith does not depend on man. It depends on God; it is His work and His gift; it is wrought by His grace. The words testify in the second place, that faith possesses a purifying power. Faith is therefore something that is full of life and power; it is as Luther says, 'a living, mighty, busy thing'; it exercises a purifying in-

85) Kretzmann: Popular Commentary, vol. I, N.T. p. 548.

86) Triglotta. p. 145.

fluence, insomuch that the heart which had previously been ungodly and unclean is now changed, consecrated to God, and morally cleansed. This verse sets forth in the third place that the seat of faith is in the heart -- not merely in the memory or in the thoughts -- but in the very center of the life of the soul."⁽³⁷⁾ The way of salvation could scarcely be more clearly declared than in the story of the Jailor of Philippi, Acts 16,30.31: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." In no clearer way could the way of salvation and justification be taught. In the above text, a conscience stricken sinner asks: How can I be saved? What was it that caused this hardened sinner to ask this question? It was because his conscience had awoken. He recognized in the earthquake (v.26), the voice of an offended God. He had come to a realization of his own sinfulness and utter depravity. Having reached this state, the sinner is in position to hear and to accept the way to salvation. Thus Paul says: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." What does Paul mean to say in these words! He means to say: Come to the Saviour, just as you are, as a poor sinner, seeking mercy and forgiveness with Him, and you will be saved. Note, that we are not to do this or that, or the other thing; we are simply to believe, hear the Gospel and submit ourselves to the influence of the Spirit, who has kindled faith within us, by which faith we accept all that Christ has accomplished for us. The very moment that we renounce all reliance on ourselves, all ideas of human merit and flee to Christ as our only refuge, committing our souls to Him, trusting His promises and relying solely on His merits, that very moment all is ours, and we are justified, made children of God and heirs of eternal salvation.

Again in Acts 2,21, Luke writes: "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." On the basis of this text Luther says: "Das heisst recht gepredigt von Christo und seinem Reich, naemlich, dass er der Herr und Christ sei, den man anrufen soll, und durch den Glauben an Ihn selig werden. So starken Namen, spricht er, hat dieser gekreuzigte Jesus von Nazareth, dass er kann selig machen.....Nun sagt Petrus, aus dem Propheten Joel: Der Herr, der den Heiligen Geist ausgiesst ueber alles Fleisch, wird selig machen alle, die seinen Namen anrufen, das ist, durch den Glauben an ihn wird er von Suende und Tod erloesen."⁽³⁸⁾ The same truth is again expressed, Acts 4,11.12: "This is the stone which was set at naught of you builders which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." Jesus has earned complete

37) Schaff-Lange: Commentary on Acts. p.282.

38) Luther, St. Louis, XIII, pp.2070. 2071.

salvation for us, and nowhere else is there salvation to be found. His name is proclaimed among men throughout the world, and he who would be saved, must turn to this one source and Author of everlasting life. Note also what the Apology says on basis of the above text: "I cannot ^{believe} in the name of Christ in any other way than when I hear His merit ^{preach-}ed, and lay hold of that. Therefore by believing on the name of Christ and not by trust in our works we are saved. For the word "name" in this place means the reason by which and on account of which salvation comes. Therefore to glorify and confess the name of Christ is as much as trusting in Him, who alone is, and is called Christ, as the cause of my salvation and my treasure by which I am saved."⁽³⁹⁾ It has been intimated by critics that Luke leaves a place for works as a merit of salvation. This they try to base on Acts 15,20: "But that we write unto them that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled and from blood." That this text does not permit such an interpretation, Luther has clearly shown in the following words: "Schliesst nun Jacobus nicht wider Petrum und sich selbst in einer Rede? Und ob man wollet sophistisieren, es waere geredet nicht von ganzen Gesetz, sondern von Stuecken, davon man etliche moecht aufladen und etliche nicht aufladen; das tuts nicht. Denn St. Paulus schliesst, Gal. 5,3: 'Wer ein Stueck des Gesetzes haelt, der ist schuldig ganz und gar zu halten.' Ich will mein Duenken hierzu sagen: Es war den Juden Moses Gesetz (so zu reden), angeboren, eingeboren, eingesaeugt, eingelebt von Jugend auf, dass es fast ihre Natur worden war; darum konnten sie der Heiden Wesen nicht ertragen, dass man sie solt ihnen vergleichen, wenn sie sahen wie die Heiden Blut, Erstuecktes und Goetzenopfer assen und gleichwohl Gottes Volk oder Christen sich ruehmten. Solches hat St. Jacobus bewogen, solches Aergernis zu verhueten, damit die Juden nicht vor den Kopf gestossen wuerden. Es machts aber St. Jacobus sehr fein sauberlich laesst das ganze Gesetz Moses von Opfern ganz anstehen und nimmt allein die vier Stueck vor sich, daran die Juden ausser Jerusalem unter den Heiden sich aergerten. Den Heiden schadete es nichts vor Gott ob sie Blut, Erstuecktes, Goetzenopfer in oeffentlichem aeusserlichen Brauche meideten, weil sie doch im Gewissen durch die Gnade des alles frei waren und sonst im Abwesen der Juden ohne Aergernis und Fahr des Gewissens essen konnten, was sie geluestete; und die Juden waren auch wohl gleich frei im Gewissen, konnten aber die aeusserliche, alte Gewohnheit nicht so ploetzlich aendern. Also sind die zween Artikel, St. Petri und St. Jacob, wider einander und doch nicht wider einander. St. Peters ist von Glauben, St. Jacobus ist von der Liebe."⁽⁴⁰⁾ However Luke has in no few passages clearly estab-

39) Triglotta, p.148.

40) C. Mueller: "Luthers Erklaerung der Heiligen Schrift." Seite 476.

lished that salvation is by faith alone out of pure grace, Acts 15,11: "But we believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they." And again, Acts 26,18: "To open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among ^{them} which are sanctified by faith that is in me." "Thus the Scripture in this passage calls natural man so far as spiritual and divine matter ^{are} are concerned, nothing but darkness. The way of salvation, the method by which God leads sinners to His mercy is here plainly and explicitly taught. Through the preaching of the Gospel the eyes of the sinners are opened that they might know Christ their Saviour; through the Gospel ^{the} the sinners are converted that they turn away from darkness, from the service of sin, from the power of Satan, to God and to the Light and Salvation in Christ, so that all heathenism and superstition is left behind, and ^{no} nothing but the knowledge, worship and service of the blessed Redeemer engages their attention. Note, that the faith which has worked trust in the salvation of Jesus immediately consecrates the believer, sets him apart, sanctifies him for the service of the Lord."⁽⁴¹⁾ On this central doctrine of the Christian religion, Luke's teaching is in perfect harmony with all the other New Testament writers. We need but ^{note} note a few texts to convince ourselves as to this fact; 1 Pet.1,5: "Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." Mark 16,16: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." John 3,16: "God so loved the ^{world} world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him ^{should} should not perish but have everlasting life." Rom.3,28: "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law."

6. All this which we have noted under soteriology is a result of God's ^{God's} determination from eternity. Thus it is proper at this time for us to see what Acts tells us about God's eternal election. We find that here too, our Book does not leave us in the dark. Luke ^{says} says Acts 13,48: "And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." "They believed, not all but as many as were ordained or appointed to eternal life by God, not in consequence of an absolute decree, but in Christ Jesus, through the redemption in His blood. Their belief was the result of this gracious ^{deter-} determination and foreknowledge, predestination of God, which is spoken of at length in other passages of Scripture. And this fact is a source of ^{great} great comfort. The faith of a Christian and his ^{preservation} preservation in this faith is not a matter which depends upon his own reason and strength, a precarious basis at best, but upon the grace of God in Christ Jesus assured to him before the foundation of the world. 'The eternal election of God not ^{only} only

sees and knows in advance the salvation of the elect, but also by the gracious and good will of God in Christ Jesus is a reason which effects, procures, helps and promotes our salvation, and what pertains thereto; whereon also our salvation is so firmly founded that the portals of ^{hell} cannot prevail against it, as it is written, As many as were ordained to eternal life, believed' Acts 13,48. (Formula of Concord). "⁽⁴²⁾ Luke ^{shows} completely destroys the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, and ^{Acts} shows that there is no such a thing as a "passing by" of grace. Luke says Acts 13,46: "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo we turn to the Gentiles." Thus the obstinate and stiff-necked Jews were not passed by, but were given the chance again and again until they themselves, 'put it from them." Again we read Acts ¹⁷: "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the father ^{hath} put in His own power." "Without any doubt God also knows and has determined for every one, the time and hour of his call and conversion, and when He will raise again one who has lapsed. But since this has not ^{been} revealed to us we have the command always to keep urging the word but to intrust the time and hour of conversion to God."⁽⁴³⁾ Luke has in this doctrine, as in all those previously treated, the hearty support of the other New Testament writers. Matthew 24,22: "And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elects' sake, those days shall be shortened." Mark 13,27: "And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four ^{winds}, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven." 1 Pet.1,2: "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. And so also St. Paul, 2 Tim.1,9: "Who ^{saw} saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, ^{but} according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Jesus Christ before the world began."

V

From the very beginning of Acts we learn that at the earliest ^{period} of the Church of Christ all the means of grace were employed and ^{appreciated} in their full significance as means by which salvation is imparted. This we learn definitely from Acts 2,42: "And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship and in the breaking of bread and

42) Kretzmann: Popular Commentary, vol. I, N.T. p. 601.

43) Triglotta p. 1080.

48) Triglotta, p. 1080.

(25)

in prayers." The word was used, partly, in the missionary addresses, ^{and} and partly in the subsequent appropriate and thorough instruction imparted ^{by} by the Apostles. The sacraments were in use; baptism as a means of regeneration, ^{-era-} and Lord's Supper(breaking of bread).

1. The position, power and importance which the Acts ascribes to the Word of God is most wonderfully brought out in the following words of Dr. Moorehead: "The apostolic preachers employed the word of God in their work. They relied on nothing else for producing the results at which ^{they} they aimed. It is remarkable how uniformly Acts witnesses to their constant and unfailing use of Scripture. Twenty-five times at least we read of the preaching of the Word, the searching of the Scriptures, the effect of ^{the} the Word, the growth of the Word, the prevailing of the Word etc. (Acts 2, 41; 4, 29. 31.; 6, 4. 7.; 8, 14. 25.; 10, 26. 37). As already remarked, they constantly appealed to the Old Testament when addressing those familiar with it. But they made just as wide a use of the teaching, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Peter assures us that the first ministers preached ^{the} the Gospel 'with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven.' Their preaching ^{was} was therefore inspired, infallibly true and powerful. It was preeminently Biblical. Note the descriptive titles given the Word they preached in our book e.g., 'the Word of the Lord,' 'Word of Salvation,' 'Word of His grace,' 'ministry of the Word' etc. It was this strict adherence to revealed truth of God which imparted such strength and effect to the ^{re-} preaching of the Apostles. Apostolic men had no time and no wish to lecture ^{on} on their travels, on Greek art, or Roman militarism, on education, literature or civilization. They would not have dared trifle with men's souls, nor with the honor of their Master, Jesus Christ, by taking up such matters. Christ was their one theme, the Word of God their efficient weapon. And this is the need of our time. We should return to apostolic methods, and use the Word in its naked simplicity, in its convincing might, in its arousing energy, in its enlightening power, in its rugged strength, in its asserting knowledge, in its purifying joy and its Spirit given utterances ^{-nces} Were this done, we should hear no more of the feebleness of the pulpit and the deadness of the churches. In all the world there is nothing so attractive as the Bible, the Scriptures of Truth."⁽⁴⁴⁾ The Word of God, a means of grace, is clearly and positively taught in Acts. c. 10, 5. 6. Luke writes: "Call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter,.... he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do." "According to the decree of God ^{and} and the method which He established, repentance, and the remission of sins were to be preached to all nations in the name of Jesus, so that it is the Word of the Gospel, and, indeed the Word to which men bear witness, that is the appointed means of grace. No case ever occurred in which an

angel was sent for the purpose of converting a soul, and no man should ever allow his faith to be dependent on such an extraordinary appearance from the higher world."⁽⁴⁵⁾ Our confessional writings base the doctrine of the Word as a means of grace on the above mentioned text (Acts 10,5.6) "God out of His immense goodness and mercy, has his divine eternal law and his wonderful plan concerning our redemption, namely, the holy alone-saving Gospel of His eternal Son, our only Saviour and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, publicly preached; and by this (preaching), collects an eternal Church for Himself, from the human race, and works in the hearts of men true repentance and knowledge of sins, and true faith in the Son of God, Jesus Christ. And by this means and in no other way, namely, through ^{his} his holy Word, when men hear it preached, or read it, and the holy Sacraments when they are used according to His Word God decrees to call men to ^{etern-} eternal salvation, draw them to Himself, convert, regenerate and sanctify them."⁽⁴⁶⁾ That the Word is a means of grace is again specifically brought out, Acts 9,6: "And the Lord said unto him, arise, and go ^{into} into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." To this passage Luther remarks: Here we should mark especially: although God from heaven speaks with Paul yet He does not want to annul the office of preaching, nor make this an extraordinary case; but He directs him ^{to} into the city, to the pulpit and preacher; there he should hear and learn what is to be learned. For God our Lord wants to establish something special for no ^{one} one but gives His baptism and Gospel to the whole world, to one as well ^{as} as to the other. There one may learn how to be saved, and not wait whether God will make something new and send us an angel from heaven. For it is His will that we go and hear the Gospel from those that preach it; there we should find it and nowhere else."⁽⁴⁷⁾ So also Acts 1,3: "Speaking ^{of} of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." Even as the hearts of the men who were going to Emmaus burned within them (Luke 24,32), while He ^{opened} opened to them the Scriptures, so the Lord still imparts light and warmth to believers through the Word as a means of grace. Again Acts 11,14: "Who shall tell thee words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved."⁴ A few references to the other New Testament writers will readily substantiate Luke in his teaching as to the Word, as a means of grace. Peter writes 1 Pet.1,25: "But the Word of the Lord endureth forever. And ^{this} this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you." St. Paul, Rom.1, 16: "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, for it is ^{power} power of God unto salvation, unto every one that believeth." So also the Gospel writers, John 5,39: "Search the Scriptures for in them ye think ye

45) Schaff-Lange: Commentary on Acts. p.192.

46) Triglotta, p.901.

47) Kretzmann: Popular Commentary, N.T.vol.I, p.576.

have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." Mark 1,15:
"The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent ye and believe the Gospel!"

2. We find the doctrine of Holy Baptism most definitely revealed in Acts. Acts 2,38.39: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you and to your children and to all that are afar off, even as many as ~~the~~ the Lord our God shall call." "Christian baptism is made in the name of Jesus, because the work of Jesus made the gift of baptism possible since it is made. Unto remission of sins, εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν. Forgiveness of sins, full pardon is given to the poor sinner through the washing of regeneration. Baptism is not a mere symbol or form of initiation into the brotherhood of believers, nor is it a work by which remission of sins is earned. The water of baptism, through the power of the Word which is in and with the water, transmits and gives the remission of sins as earned by Jesus Christ. Peter makes his application very emphatic, declaring that the promise of God unto salvation is unto them and unto their children, is earnestly intended for them. The Gospel promise of God also in regard to the remission of sins as transmitted through baptism is not only to the adults, but also to the children; the children are very decidedly included in the command to baptize."⁽⁴⁸⁾ We find that Luke expressly emphasizes that in case of adults, instruction is necessary before baptism, Acts 2,41: "And when they had gladly received His word they were baptized." Luke relates in detail the story of the Ethiopian Eunuch; Acts 8, 36.37: "See here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." "The Eunuch, half in eagerness, and half in fear, pointed to the water and asked whether there would be anything in the way of his being baptized. Philip thereupon put the question which is fundamental in every true formula for baptizing, saying that his wish may very well be granted if he believes with all his heart. And the Eunuch, filled with the sweetness and beauty of the Gospel proclamation which he has just heard, utters ^{his} confession: I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God; a complete ^{but} comprehensive formula amounting to a confession in the triune God."⁽⁴⁹⁾ Again in Acts 16,32.33 we have a reference to baptism. Luke here says: "And they spake unto him the word of the Lord and to all that were in ^{his} house and was baptized he and all his straightway." "This was a brief but comprehensive instruction preceeding baptism. After Paul and

48) Kretzmann: Popular Commentary, vol.I, p.548.

49) Kretzmann: Popular Commentary, vol.I, p.574.

(22)

Silas had been received they gave to both the jailor and all the members of his household a washing to remove all the stain on their souls by baptizing them all without delay. This sacrament assured to the poor harrowed man, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, which he needed so greatly on account of the feeling of guilt and damnable-ness which had come upon him with the realization of his sin."⁽⁵⁰⁾ All that Luke teaches concerning the sacrament of holy baptism, is endorsed by the other New Testament writers. Mark 10,14: "But when Jesus saw it, He was much displeased and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God." St. Paul says, Eph.5,26: "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." This is precisely what Luke writes, Acts 22,16: "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." So also Peter, 1 Pet.3,21: "The like figure whereunto even Baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Titus 3,5-7: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

Luke also refers to the baptism wrought by John, Acts 19,4: "Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance saying unto the people that they should believe on Him which should come after him that is, on Jesus Christ." "We must distinguish between the baptism which John personally administered and that of his later disciples which is commonly referred to as the baptism of John. The baptism with which John by a special command of God, baptized, was a valid sacrament, which gave to those that confessed their sins, and believed the preaching of John, forgiveness of sins and the grace of God. But John the Baptist was merely the precursor of Christ; his preaching, as his baptism, was a testimony of Christ who was to come after him, and who, through His suffering and death, was to earn salvation and forgiveness for all sinners. After Christ had been revealed to Israel and formally entered upon his ministry, the time of preparation was ended, the work and the office of John ceased to have value. And when Christ then by His death had finished His work, and after His resurrection had given His disciples the command to baptize all nations in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; when above all, the day of Pentecost had come, and the disciples of the Lord were now baptizing in the name of Jesus Christ, the Cruci-

fied and Resurrected, then the baptism of John no longer had any value, just as the Old Testament sacrament of circumcision, though still practiced by the Jewish Christians, was regarded as a mere ceremony."⁽⁵¹⁾

3. As to the Sacrament of the Altar or Lord's Supper, not a great deal is said in Acts. However, Luke distinctly mentions this sacrament, thus showing us that the Lord's Supper was celebrated and regarded as a means of grace by the early Christians. We read Acts 2,42.46: "And ^{they} continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. v.46: And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart." "The intimate ^{ate} fellowship of the early Christians was expressed in the breaking of bread. If this expression does not refer exclusively to the celebration of Holy Communion, it certainly does not exclude the sacrament. It ^{plain-}ly does not refer to an ordinary meal, and was probably used by Luke to describe briefly the common meal which the believers connected with the celebration of the Lord's Supper in the early days of the Church."⁽⁵²⁾ Luke again refers to the Lord's Supper, Acts 20,7: "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight." "This solemn assembly of disciples met together for no ordinary meal. The 'breaking of bread' can only signify the Lord's Supper, the communion of the body and blood of Christ, which in these early days seems to have been generally united with the Agape, or Love Feast."⁽⁵³⁾ Luke is confirmed in that which he writes concerning the Lord's Supper, by Paul 1 Cor.10,16: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"

VI.

Concerning church and ministry, Acts furnishes us with some important facts. Our author plainly tells us what constitutes membership in the Christian Church, Acts 5,14: "And believers were the more added to ^{the} Lord, multitudes both of men and women." On grounds of this text, Dr. Pieper says: "Weder das aeußere Verbundensein mit einer Kirchengemeinschaft noch der aeußere Gebrauch der Gnadenmittel noch das aeußere ⁱⁿ⁻Be-
kenntnis zum christlichen Glauben noch die Verwaltung von Aemtern in der Kirche noch die Bemuehung um 'Sittlichkeit' nach dem Vorbilde Christi

51) Kretzmann: Popular Commentary, vol.I, N.T. p.630.

52) Kretzmann: Popular Commentary, vol.I, N.T. p.544.

53) Lutheran Commentary on Acts, p.296.

noch eine unmittelbare Wiedergeburt oder Versenkung in Gott, wovon die Schwaermer aller Gattungen reden usw., sondern nur der persoehnliche Glaube an die Vergebung der Sunden die durch Christi satisfactio vicaria erworben ist und im Evangelium verkuendigt und zugesagt wird, macht zu einem Gliede der christlichen Kirche. Apg.5,14: „Es wurden hinzuge-tan“, naemlich, zur christlichen Kirche in Jerusalem, „die da glaubten an den Herrn“, προσετίθεντο πιστεύοντες τῷ Κυρίῳ. Das allein wodurch ein Mensch zu Christo kommt und vor Gott gerecht wird, in Gottes Gnadengemein-schaft tritt und ein Kind Gottes wird -- und das ist der Glaube an die Loskaufung (ἀπολύτρωσις), die durch Christum geschehen ist, Roem.3,24 --- das allein macht ihn auch zu einem Gliede der christlichen Kirche.“⁽⁵⁴⁾ So also writes St. Pater, St. Paul and St. John; 1 Pet.2,9: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation; a peculiar peop-le, that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." Eph.1,1: "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus." John 10,26.27: "But ye believe not be-cause ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."

The Acts also points out certain characteristics of the Church. The Church is invisible, because the constitutive factor of the Church, faith which is in the hearts of the believers, is invisible to men and known to God alone, Acts 1,24: "And they prayed and said, Thou Lord which know-est the hearts of all men, show whether of these two thou hast chosen." So also 2 Tim.2,19: "The Lord knoweth them that are His." Furthermore Luke writes Acts 19,43: "To Him give all the prophets witness, that throu His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." Here Luke shows that the Christian Church is a universal Church, because it includes those of all times, of all peoples in all places, who believe in Christ. Christian faith has, throughout the course of time, experienc-ed no change. It was always, and is yet to-day, faith in the forgiveness of sins through Christ Jesus and His redemptive work. Luke is confirmed in this point by John, John 8,56: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it and was glad." So also St. Paul, Gal.3,6: "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." The Church of Christ is apostolic, Acts 2,42: "And they continued stead-fastly in the Apostles' doctrine." Thus Luke shows that the Church of Christ is apostolic inasmuch as all its members to the end of time be-lieve through the Word of the Apostles. So also John 17,20: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word." Luke positively refutes the doctrine of the Roman-

ists and Episcopalians in their doctrine of the succession of Bishops, Acts 20,17.28: "And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the Church. 28. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." To this passage Dr. Pieper remarks: "Dass die Roemischen und Episcopalen den apostolischen Charakter der Kirche in die Bischoefliche Sukzession setzen, ist mit Recht als eine Kinderei bezeichnet worden, da die Schrift erstlich keinen Unterschied zwischen Bischoefen und lehrenden Aeltesten oder Pastoren kennt." (55)

Acts also speaks of Churches in particular places, thus the ecclesia particularis et localis. Such examples are: Acts 8,1: "The church which is in Jerusalem (ἡ ἐκκλησία ἡ ἐν Ἱερουσαλὺμοις)." Luke refers to the local Church, Acts 20,28: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." So also Acts 14,23.27: "And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed. 27. And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them and how He had opened the door of faith unto the gentiles." We learn also from Acts that a Church does not lose its orthodox character through false doctrine which may arise in it occasionally, Acts 20,30: "Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." As to what Luke writes, Acts 4,12: "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved," Dr. Pieper writes: "Unbedingt und allein zur Seligkeit notwendig, ist die Gemeinschaft mit Christo durch den Glauben. Der Grundsatz: 'ausser der Kirche kein Heil' --- 'Wer die Kirche auf Erden nicht zur Mutter hat, hat Gott im Himmel nicht zum Vater', ist daher nur in dem Sinne wahr, dass ausser der unsichtbaren Kirche kein Heil und keine goettliche Gnadenkindschaft mit den Glaebigen und Heilige steht, der steht auch nicht in Gemeinschaft mit Christo; hingegen, wer durch den Glauben in Gemeinschaft mit Christo steht der steht auch in Gemeinschaft mit allen denen, in denen Christus wohnt, das ist, mit der unsichtbaren Kirche." (56)

Concerning the office of the ministry, Acts gives us definite word. In the first place Luke points out the object of the ministry, Acts 20, 28: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God,

55) Pieper's Dogmatics, p.475, vol.III.

56) Pieper's Dogmatics, p.489, vol.III.

which he hath purchased with his own blood." The pastors' field of activity extends over the entire congregation and also over the entire congregation (προσέχειν παντὶ τῷ ποιμνίῳ); he is to feed the church of God (ποιμαίνειν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ), and he is to admonish each individual member (νουθετεῖν ἕνα ἕκαστον). On the basis of the above text, (Acts 20,29), we have the assurance that the indirect call is no less divine than the direct call, for it is the Holy Ghost who has made the pastor an overseer (ἐν ᾧ ὕμας τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ Ἅγιον ἔθετο ἐπισκόπους). This is equally as important for the servant of the Word, as for those whom he serves. Let us also note what Peter and Paul say as to the office of the ministry. 1 Pet. 5,2: "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind." So also St. Paul, Tit. 1,9: "Holding fast the faithful word, as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayer." Thus we see that Luke does not stand alone in what he teaches in Acts concerning the ministry.

The doctrine concerning the call is clearly and definitely taught in Acts. If we had nothing more than what we are told in Acts, we would have the doctrine of the Call complete. Note what Dr. Hoenicke says: „Die mit telbare Berufung, und zwar durch die Gemeinde ist die von Gott selbst gesetzte und als heilig feierlich bestaetigte Ordnung. Gleich die erste wichtige Berufung, die des Matthias geschieht durch die Gemeinde, (Apg. 1, 15ff.), denn die Gemeinde waehlt hier, und damit beruft sie. Den Gemeinde gleidern legt Petrus die Berufssache vor (v. 15); sie stellen Kandidaten auf und werfen das Los, das auf Matthias faellt (v. 23: „Und sie stellen zween, Joseph, genannt Barsabas, mit dem Zunamen Just, und Matthias.'). Und so wird er zu den elf vorhandenen Aposteln zugeordnet. Dies Waehlen und Berufen erscheint als etwas in der Schrift begruendetes. Petrus sagt v. 16: „Es musste die Schrift erfuellet werden, und zu dem was noch erfuellet werden muss (v. 21) gehoert dies: „Sein Bistum empfangen ein anderer' (Ps. 109, 8). Zur Verwickelung dieses „muss' hat Petrus die Gemeinde versammelt und so ist das Handeln der Gemeinde in jenes „muss' der Schrift gefasst und wird uns gezeigt als etwas, das nach der Schrift so sein muss. Es wird der Einwurf gemacht: das ganze war ein rein menschliches Handeln; Gott hatte Paulus als Zwaelften erkoren. Dagegen: Gott hat die durch die Wahl der Gemeinde erfolgte Berufung des Matthias feierlich bestaetigt. Pfingsten faellt der Heilige Geist auf alle Apostel, denn Petrus ist mit den Elfen versammelt (v. 14), also ist Matthias mitgezahlt; Gott also zaehlt selbst durch das inspirierte Wort ihn zu den Aposteln..... Ferner Berufungen durch die Gemeinde sind, Apg. 6, 2: Wahl der Diakonen, die nur eine Abzweigung vom Predigtamt sind; Apg. 13, 1: Absonderung Pauli und Bar-

nabas; Apg. 14, 23: $\chi\epsilon\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\upsilon\nu\eta\sigma\alpha\nu\tau\epsilon\varsigma$, d.h. liessen durch die Gemeinde wahlen. Schluss aus allem: Gott selbst hat die Berufung durch die Gemeinde als heilige ihm gefaellige Ordnung bestaetigt und in der Kirche eingesetzt." (57)

VII.

The final point to be considered in the order of our outline of doctrinal contents is: the State, and the Christians duty toward the same. Although we have but a couple passages which distinctly refer to this matter, nevertheless, Luke's stand also on this point is clearly expressed. Acts 4, 19, we read: "But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye." Referring to this passage Dr. Hoenicke remarks: "Dieser Gehorsam hat da eine Grenze und in dem Stueck, wo von dem Buerger gefordert wird, etwas gegen Gottes Gebot und zumal gegen das Evangelium zu tun. Aber es entbindet nicht von Gehorsam gegen die Obrigkeit, wenn diese ein ungerechtes Gesetz, Auflage oder Steuer usw. ordnet, wodurch man Schaden erleiden muss. Uebel leiden is nicht wider das christliche Gewissen, wohl aber Uebel tun." (58) Christians are necessarily bound to obey their own magistrates and laws, save only when commanded to sin, for Acts 5, 29: "We ought to obey God rather than men." Thus also St. Paul writes Rom. 13, 1: "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers. For there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God." Matt. 22, 21: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's."

We have now examined the doctrinal contents of Acts in detail and are in position to sum up Luke's stand on the main heads of Christian doctrine. There are certain points in all these doctrines which Luke emphasizes in particular. Thus with reference to God, Luke points out His attributes: omnipotence, omnipresence, etc., and clearly teaches that God is the Creator of the World. Christ is the Son of God, true God and true man. He performed the great work of our redemption, suffered, died and rose again for our salvation. He ascended into Heaven, but will return again to judge the world. The Holy Spirit is true God, proceeding from the Father and the Son, and He it is who calls, gathers, enlightens and keeps us in the true faith unto eternal life.

Acts teaches that all men are sinners and are in need of a Saviour. This Saviour we have in Jesus Christ and if we, by God's grace repent of our sins, trust soely in the merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,

57) Hoenicke's Dogmatics; vol. IV. p. 182. 188.

58) Hoenicke's Dogmatics; vol. IV. p. 218.

we have forgiveness of sins, life and salvation; and this we are sure^{of} of by virtue of God's eternal election.

The means by which we appropriate the benefits of Christ unto oursel-
ves are: The Word of the Gospel, Baptism and Lord's Supper. The Word^{of} of-
fers to the sinner God's grace, forgiveness of sins, life and salvation
through faith in Christ Jesus. Baptism is not a mere ceremony, but ^{take} takes
place *εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν*. And so also Acts shows that the Lord's Sup-
per was likewise freely enjoyed by the early Christians.

The Church, according to Acts, are all who believe that they have^{for} for-
giveness of sins through Christ's vicarious atonement. Furthermore,
Christ has instituted the ministerial office for the purpose of perform-
ing the duties of the Church in preaching the Gospel and administering
the sacraments. The office is conferred by the Holy Spirit through the
congregations.

Finally, with reference to the State, Christians are to submit to the^{the} the
civil powers, but always bearing in mind, "we must obey God rather than
men."

We have now not only had the pleasure of learning Luke's clear and
definite stand on the main heads of Christian doctrine as they are ^{found} found
in Acts, but we have examined and proven to ourselves that Luke's teach-
ing throughout ACTS is in closest harmony with all the other New Testa-
ment writers.

16. A. T. Robertson: "Luke the Historian in the Light of Research".
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